Mr. James H. Mason
Carroll & Graf, Publishers Inc.
260 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N.Y. 10001

6/1/89

Dear Mr. Mason,

Your yesterday's letter says you need to know by the end of June whether I'll "scan" Kim Marrs' manuscript. This means that whatever I tell you you need to know as soon as possible. Whatever I say will also require some explanation that is not typical in publishing so I begin with that before having time to even glance at the ms. I have read your letter and your catalogue, including what you say about this book.

As Dick Gallen may have told you, I am quite conservative on matters relating to our political assassinations. Others, including you and Marrs, need not believe as I do, that the assassination of a president is the most subversive of crimes in a society such as ours. It has the effect of a coup d'etat and nullifies our system of society. You therefore will not find any theory of conspiracy or "solution" in any of my six books on the JFK assassination and my one on that of Dr. King. (I do recall that you told me the ms. examines some of these theories and I have no problem with that per se.)

I am now 76, in impaired health, limited in what I can do, but with a solid reputation among those who are not partisan and a fairly large percentage of those who are partisans. I do not want even by accident to risk what I regard as a good reputation, particularly for responsibility and accuracy. My books have been examined closely and no significant error has been found in any of them by those who were anxious to find error and basis for criticism of me and my work.

I therefore have a problem with your request, with, "I really don't think it needs a line by line reading that delves into the labyrinth of detail. What we are looking for is a 'scanning' of topics the author is focusing on and identifying areas where he tends to stray unnecessarily into exaggeration and what ~~I would~~ I'd call 'speculative overkill.'"

Unless you were to ask me to find fault I could not do this and meet my responsibilities to you or to myself. Without a word-for-word reading, particularly where a single word or clause can make all the difference in the world, I could not give you a responsible opinion and I could not believe that I had been really honest no matter how valid any opinion I might offer might be. I illustrate with a book you reprinted and I've not read since it first appeared in hardback, Lifton's modestly titled "Best Evidence." I presume you have some recollection of his theory without which he has no book at all, just about everything else having been published years earlier, despite his claim for originality.

I have no reluctance in stating that his theory is entirely untenable by the existng evidence, including sources he uses selectively. I illustrate with a few of his statements you may recall:

JFK's corpse was offloaded from the plane on the side away from the airport proper and was not seen. There were some 3,000 people looking right st that side of that plane.

It was secretly flown in a second helicopter to Walter Reed Hospital. The second helicopter brought the Fort Myer honor guard in and flew it out directly to the Navy hospital, not to Walter Reed.

It was snuck in by the back gate, unseen. The back gate was locked two hours earlier and the guard was removed so no high-ranking office could pull rank on an enlisted man and order him to unlock that gate.

Now suppose I'd just "scanned" the ms of this book and had missed in scanning these and other total disqualifications of that very persuasively written theory? I would not have met my responsibilities to you, to myself or to history in the future or the public

contemporaneously.

While I do not yet know which theories Marrs addresses, as a generality what I say above I say confidently about any of which I know and I would not be be easy if all I did was scan the ms. I would also be uneasy for you because this is a strange and different subject in which utterly spurious libel suits are no unknown both as a threat and as an actuality. They also permit odd people to get attention they otherwise would not get.

I skimmed your catalogue and I was pleased to see that you reprint some of the classics of my youth but I read only your description of this book. I then learned for the first time that you have it scheduled for publication. Beginning with the first sentence it gives me problems in offering any opinion based on scanning and with fact. The emphasis in what I quote is your's:"Jim Marrs...pulls together for the first time <u>all</u> the available facts concerning that tragic day..." This just is not possible and is obviously not true. Again I use a simplification.

I have filed countless FOIA lawsuits as a result of which I brought to light and have and make available to all (which mostly means those I do not agree with) some third of a million pages of formerly withheld government records, mostly of the FBI. By and large most of these are available only from me. In the recent past people working on books and TV specials that commercialized the 25th anniversary of the assassination had unsupervised access to all of this rich material and the use of our copier. Right now someone working for both BBC and a British lawyer is copying whatever they want from my records relating to the King assassination. I don't know, don't want to know and haven't asked to know what they are copying. I know only what I am asked about of their interests. This free access applies to anyone at all and that is well known within the field. Jim Marrs has never asked me for access or anything else. He thus cannot know "<u>all</u> the available facts."

Your next paragraph indicates that rather than limiting himself to reporting or commentary on the theories of others he in fact espouses his own theories. (I do not for a minute question his right to do this but it is not the same as merely assessing the theories of others. I also have questions of fact based on your own words here. That is not something I would be willing to skip through and offer you an opinion. Some, as "the convenient deaths" may be just plain rubbish and I could not merely scan that.

Particularly when you schedule appearance to be a commemoration of that terrible crime.

As I think I told you yesterday, medical needs will take up the rest of the day beginning in a few minutes. I hope to be able to begin to look at the ms. tomorrow. Whether or not this is possible, I will mail you something tomorrow night because we have no outgoing weekend mail after tomorrow night. I'll drive either this or whatever else I may be able to add into town so you can, hopefully, have it Monday morning.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

Please excuse my typing. I must sit with my legs elevated. They are thus to the side of the typewriter and between it and my desk.

6/2/89

After reading and correcting what I wrote yesterday and thinking about it a bit more, on the probability that I will not want to do this I offer some unsolicited advice, based in part on my knowledge of the field and the people in it.

To offer an expert $500 for any kind of a report on a manuscript is grossly inadequate and can be t aken as insulting. You might have no trouble getting one of the many buffs and some who have been published doing this free for you but I think you'd then get what you pay for.

My feelings about this were stronger as soon as I saw this is a 1100 page plus ms; a stack of triple-spaced pages 3 1/2 inches high.

There are few authentic experts in the field and I know of none who does not espouse some theory or another or who could find the time, only two of the latter. Those who have their own theories may be antagonistic toward others and not impartial in making any assessment.